

STATE OF MAINE
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Docket No. 98-673

October 29, 1998

CENTRAL MAINE POWER COMPANY
Request for Approval of Sample
Unbundled Bills and Waiver of
Chapter 309 §§ 02; 5(A)(1)(E);
and 5(B)(2)

ORDER OF APPROVAL

I. Summary

On August 26, 1998, Central Maine Power Company (CMP) filed a request for approval of proposed sample unbundled bills pursuant to Chapter 309 § 4, as well as several waiver requests from the requirements of Chapter 309. In this Order, the bill formats are approved and some of the waiver requests are granted.

II. CMP's Request

CMP submitted five sample bills for review and approval of the bill's format:

- 1) residential rate A account;
- 2) residential rate A account with usage below 100 kWh;
- 3) residential time-of-use account;
- 4) small general service account; and
- 5) medium general service account.

CMP also requested certain waivers of Chapter 309. First, CMP requested a waiver of Chapter 309 § 2 to exclude the following charges from the unbundling requirement: area light charges; street light charges; water heater cycling program and other miscellaneous unmetered plans; and single bills issued for multiple tenants.

According to CMP, the waiver of Chapter 309 § 2 is needed for the following reasons:

a. Area light charges. The data needed to unbundle area light charges is not available to the bill printing program without making extensive modifications to the billing system in general.

b. Street light charges. An additional page would need to be added to each bill to accommodate the additional lines for each different type of light used. This would require significant modification to the bill printing program.

c. The Water Heater Cycling Program and other miscellaneous unmetered plans. There are no energy charges associated with these rates, therefore, unbundling is not necessary.

d. Adjusted bills. The bill printing program does not have the historical information regarding rates and usage necessary to show charges and credits on adjusted bills in an unbundled format.

e. Final bills, bills for billing periods of less than 27 days or greater than 33 days, and bills with prorated rate changes. The bill program does not have the data necessary to calculate unbundled charges on prorated bills.

f. Single bills for multiple tenants. Single bills for multiple tenants are calculated based on the number of separate dwellings in the building. An apartment building with four tenancies would have four minimum charges and the bill would be calculated as four separate accounts. A significant amount of programming would be needed to unbundle these bills. Also, the number of customers that receive this type of bill is small.

Second, CMP requested a waiver of the requirement that bills show a combined total rate for any rate element which is unbundled into electricity supply and delivery service components for medium general service, intermediate general service, and large general service bills. According to CMP, there are not enough lines available on these bills to locate the rate table used to show the combined rates.

Third, CMP requested a waiver of section 5(B)(2) that requires the informational statement be located on the same page as the unbundled rates. According to CMP, the 12-month usage information currently located on the front of the bill would have to be moved to the back of the bill to provide the space needed to locate the informational message on the front of the bill. CMP stated that customers at two focus group meetings indicated that they would prefer to see the usage comparison information located on the front of the bill and informational message located on the back of the bill.

III. Decision

Pursuant to section 7 of Chapter 309 of the Commission's rules, the Director of the Consumer Assistance Division (CAD) may grant waiver requests, provided that "good cause" exists for granting the waiver and the waiver is consistent with the intent of the rule.

CMP has demonstrated "good cause" for requesting a waiver of Chapter 309 § 2 for area lighting charges, street light charges, Water Heater Cycling Program and other unmetered charges, final bills, bills for periods less than 27 days with less than 100 kWh of usage and bills for periods more than 33 days, and single bills issued for multiple tenants, for the reasons stated above and that the waiver is consistent with the intent of the rule. CMP has agreed, in lieu of unbundling the charges on area lighting bills, street light bills, water heater cycling program and other miscellaneous unmetered plans and single bills issued for multiple tenants, to place the following message on the front of these bills: *"After March 1, 2000, you will be able to purchase your electricity supply from competing providers. Central Maine Power will continue to provide your delivery services. At that time, your bill will separate charges for electricity supply and electricity delivery services."*

CMP has not demonstrated "good cause" for requesting a waiver of Chapter 309 § 2 for bills issued with prorated rate changes. According to CMP, these bills can be unbundled to show an illustrative electricity supply charge, an illustrative electricity delivery charge, the applicable usage for each, and a total charge. The applicable rate for the delivery service charge, however, cannot be unbundled. It is more beneficial to customers to have the bill unbundled to show an illustrative electricity supply charge, an illustrative electricity delivery service charge, usage applicable to each, and a total charge, than to not have the bill unbundled at all. With these charges unbundled, the bills will more closely resemble the bills that customers will receive after March 1, 2000.

CMP has demonstrated "good cause" for requesting a waiver of Chapter 309 § 5(1)(E) for medium general service, intermediate general service, and large general service bills for the reason stated above and that the waiver is consistent with the intent of the rule. Bills for these accounts will display the applicable illustrative electricity supply rate, and the applicable illustrative electricity delivery rate(s), along with the usage applicable to each. Bills will not display the combined total rate for the unbundled rate elements.

CMP has not demonstrated "good cause" for requesting a waiver of chapter 309 § 5(B)(2). CMP claims in its waiver request that there is insufficient space on the front of the bill to locate the 13-month usage history, as well as the informational message. In response to a request by Commission staff for a sample bill demonstrating the lack of sufficient space on the front of the bill, CMP conceded that the informational message and the usage history could both be located

on the front of the bill for single meter accounts. CMP claims that the bill is too "busy" with both the informational message, as well as the usage history, located on the front of the bill. After discussions with Commission staff, CMP has agreed to place a shorter version of the informational statement on the front of its bills that states: *"Your bill is itemized to preview electric competition. As of March 2000, you may choose your electricity supplier. CMP will still deliver your electricity. Your total bill amount is not changed by this breakdown."*

Sample bills #1, #2, #3, and #4 are in compliance with the requirements of Chapter 309 § 5(B), with the exception of the location of the informational statement. Sample bill #5 is in compliance with the requirements of Chapter 309 § 5(B), with the exception of location of the information statement and the lack of a combined total rate for the rate elements that are unbundled into electricity supply and delivery service components.

Accordingly, it is

O R D E R E D

1) That CMP's request for an exemption of Chapter 309 § 2 for area lighting bills, street light bills, Water Heater Cycling and other unmetered bills, adjusted bills, final bills, bills for periods less than 27 days with less than 100 kWh of usage and bills for periods more than 33 days, and single bills for multiple tenants is granted;

2) That CMP include a message printed on the front of area lighting bills, street light bills, Water Heater Cycling and other unmetered bills, and single bills for multiple tenants that states: *"After March 1, 2000, you will be able to purchase your electricity supply from competing providers. Central Maine Power will continue to provide your delivery services. At that time, your bill will separate charges for electricity supply and electricity delivery services."*;

3) That CMP unbundle bills with prorated rate changes to show an illustrative electricity supply charge, an illustrative electricity delivery charge, usage applicable to each, and the total charge (these bills need not unbundle the rates associated with these charges);

4) That CMP's request for an exemption of Chapter 309 § 5 (A)(1)(E) for medium general service, intermediate general service, and large general service bills is granted;

5) That CMP will display the applicable illustrative electricity supply rate, and the applicable electricity delivery service rate(s), along with the applicable usage for each, for medium general service, intermediate general service, and large general service bills;

6) That CMP's request for an exemption of Chapter 309 § 5(B)(2) is denied;

7) That CMP place the following message on the front of all its bills, with the exception of those accounts listed in paragraph #2: *"Your bill is itemized to preview electric competition. As of March 2000, you may choose your electricity supplier. CMP will still deliver your electricity. Your total bill amount is not changed by this breakdown."*; and

8) That the format of CMP's sample bills #1, #2, #3, #4, and #5 are approved pursuant to Chapter 309 § 5(B), with the above conditions.

Dated at Augusta, Maine, this 29th day of October, 1998.

BY ORDER OF THE DIRECTOR
OF THE CONSUMER ASSISTANCE DIVISION

Matthew F. Thayer